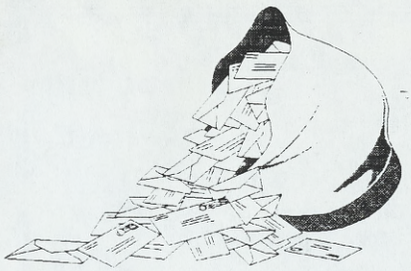

Lambda Letters Project

32586

Vol. 5, No. 2 February, 1997 www.humboldt1.com/~mamurphy/lambdaletters LambdaLP@aol.com (916) 965-6851

Nominations for Board Members Being Accepted

Lavender Library, Archives and Cultural Exchange Sacramento, CA

Deadline for Nominations: February 25, 1997

The Lambda Letters Project will hold its fourth annual membership meeting on Saturday, April 19, 1997. Please mark your calendars! The meeting will be held at the Church of Our Reedemer at 4641 Marconi Avenue at Mission in Sacramento. The agenda includes election of additional Board members, approval of Lambda Letters' 1997 budget, and other important business of the Project.

Our bylaws require that we publish a list of all those nominated for election to the Board. The list must be published at least thirty days in advance of the meeting in which the election is to take place. Therefore we must have the names and any background information about the nominees by no later than February 25, 1997. If you wish to run for the Board, or if you want to nominate someone, please send the nominee's name and background information to us by that date. We would also appreciate having the addresses and

Continued on page 8

LLP Announces Annual Appeal

Terry Sidie Repeats Generous Offer

Last year was the best year yet for Lambda Letters. We collected over 48,000 letters—over 7,000 of which were in opposition to state bills to ban the recognition of same-sex marriage in California. We defeated those bills and made considerable progress on other issues of concern to our communities.

But now we begin a new year. We must replenish the financial base needed to continue our efforts. Terry Sidie, owner of Faces of Sacramento, is again showing his amazing support of the work that we do by repeating his offer to match the highest single donation made in response to this appeal, up to $500. This is at least the third year in which he has made this offer and we owe him an immense debt of gratitude.

We need you to match his enthusiastic support by making a contribution of your own. Please review the enclosed fund-raising appeal and then make the most generous contribution that you can. We depend on your support to continue the important work that we do.

Also in This Issue:

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Lambda Letters Progress Report

Letters Collected

November, 1996	2,389 letters
In all of 1996	48,250 letters

Dollars Spent

December, 1996	$2,223
In all of 1996	$24,401

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

The Lambda Letters Newsletter is published monthly except in December by the Lambda Letters Project Inc.,
6212 Silverton Way, Carmichael, CA 95608.
Postmaster: send address changes to the address above.

Lambda Letters Project

Statement of Purpose

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy, and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered persons, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof.

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Odell Berry, (510) 569-0938
Legislative Analyst, Women's Issues: *Vacant*
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Publication of the name of any person or organization in articles or advertising in the Lambda Letters Project newsletter is not to be construed as any indication of the sexual orientation of such person or organization.

Confidentiality

The Lambda Letters Project does not sell or loan its mailing list to anyone. We give no information about who is, or is not, a member of the Project. We do, occasionally, send mailings on behalf of other worthwhile organizations, but this is done by our own volunteers so that no other organization has the opportunity to copy our mailing lists.

☐ **Yes, I want to make a donation to help LLP continue its important work. (Appreciated but not required.)**

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(*Actual cost to LLP for you to receive 44 letters in one year.)

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Lambda Letters Project
6212 Silverton Way
Carmichael, CA 95608
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Mail to LLP, 6212 Silverton Way, Carmichael, CA 95608.

Women's Issue

Oppose Cruel Welfare Reform

Recently Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, told Congress that unemployment is dropping, which might lead to inflation. He said if unemployment gets too low, employers need to pay more to persuade the few remaining job seekers to work for them. This would require higher prices (inflation) to cover the cost of those wages.

Typically the Federal Reserve Board raises interest rates to keep unemployment from going too low and triggering inflation, which makes it too expensive for employers to borrow the money needed to expand their businesses and hire new employees.

Therein lies the chief flaw in Governor Wilson's plan to reform California's welfare system. He says Aid for Dependent Children (AFDC) benefits should be limited to one year for all people seeking welfare for the first time after January 1, 1998. Those on AFDC before that date would get two years' coverage before being dropped. In both cases, they could receive welfare again after a waiting period of one year. However, all recipients would have a lifetime limit of five years of AFDC benefits.

The problem is that most welfare recipients have few job skills and little education. Employers usually won't hire them until all really qualified job seekers have been hired. By that time, the Federal Reserve Board will hike interest rates and employers won't be able to afford to hire more employees.

The Governor's spokespeople claim that 500,000 to 700,000 welfare recipients will have to be placed in work or work-related activities in 1998. Most economists say there is no way California's economy can absorb this many new workers. In fact, counties with the highest levels of welfare recipients have high unemployment too. Employers just don't have jobs for people.

Governor Wilson's plan puts many welfare recipients in a Catch-22. They will be terminated

Continued on page 5

HIV/AIDS Issue

Medi-Cal Safety Net Crucial

Protease inhibitors, the latest and most effective treatment for HIV/AIDS, can reduce HIV to undetectable levels in the blood. Although this is promising news, many doctors and health professionals are worried that these transformations may not last and that state officials may prematurely discontinue Medi-Cal funding to people before they are sure it isn't needed anymore.

The loss of Medi-Cal coverage for persons with HIV/AIDS would be devastating. AIDS Project Los Angeles reports that the latest Medi-Cal statistics for 1996 indicate that more than half of all persons living with AIDS rely on Medi-Cal for their health care.

Protease inhibitors require a complex, demanding drug regimen with precise timing of meals and pills. Unless these drugs are taken properly, their initial effect does not last. It is also too soon to tell what might happen if these new drugs work for only a short while and if resistance to them builds up.

Although large numbers of people are seeing positive results with protease inhibitors, in many cases they are getting only strong enough to go back to work on a part-time basis. In the meantime, they are caught in a bind. They are not working enough hours to receive health insurance from work and they are earning too much to keep receiving Medi-Cal payments. In some cases, they are being forced to work full-time before they are eligible for insurance coverage. Due to rules of open enrollment periods, it can take from three to nine months for someone with preexisting conditions to start receiving medical insurance benefits at work. Before that time, they have no insurance.

Please sign the letter to S. Kimberly Belshé, director of the Department of Health Services, asking that the Medi-Cal safety net be maintained for persons with HIV/AIDS, even if they are showing initial health transformations as a result of taking new, potentially lifesaving drugs like protease inhibitors.

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Issue

Dignity for All Students

In January of this year, California Assemblymember Sheila Kuehl introduced Bill A.B. 101, the Dignity for All Students Act. If adopted, this bill would extend protection from anti-gay discrimination to public educational facilities from elementary schools on up.

The bill would amend a grab bag of school, college, and university-related legislation. Where existing law prohibits discrimination on the bases of sex, race, ethnic origin, religion, color, and disability, Kuehl's bill adds the words "sexual orientation."

The bill would require that school districts ensure that their programs and activities are free from discrimination based on sexual orientation. It would prohibit a teacher from giving instruction—or a school from using textbooks or other materials—that reflect adversely on people because of their sexual orientation. It covers public, charter, and alternative schools as well as community colleges, state colleges, and the University of California system. It includes interscholastic athletics and the awarding of various scholarships, fellowships, loans, and work-study jobs for students.

Of great importance to the many gays, lesbians, and bisexuals already employed in education, the bill would prohibit discrimination in the employment of teachers and classified employees. This covers the hiring, development, advancement, and treatment of employees, as well as all personnel policies and practices.

Two recent studies out of Washington State have pointed out what many gays, lesbians, and

Continued on page 8

People of Color Issue

Protecting Our Public Schools

America's public schools are our nation's investment in the future. They provide students with the skills and knowledge necessary to be literate, informed, and reasoning citizens, and to be productive members of our work force. Our public schools reflect our nation's diversity and pluralism, promote the values of citizenship, and give our children a vigorous education in a variety of disciplines. The record of the public schools, in educating our nation's citizens, is outstanding, and there is no institution more fundamental to American society and democracy.

The Lambda Letters Project is asking you to write to members of the Assembly Education Committee to oppose A.B. 25, introduced by Assemblymember Curt Pringle (R-Garden Grove), because it would establish a voucher system that would shift public funding otherwise available for public education directly to private schools.

The bill's voucher scheme, euphemistically called "Opportunity Scholarships," is designed to appeal to lower-income families with the promise of stipends to pay the value of tuition, transportation, uniforms, supplies, and other expenses to send their children to schools of their choice, including private schools. However, the actual size of these "scholarships", which must be computed to amounts comparable to the state allowance for public school students, could not reasonably be considered full payments for quality private education. The lower-income families who potentially

Continued on page 5

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— Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

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Cruel Health Care Reform

Continued from page 3

from welfare, but government policy and economic realities will prevent many of them from finding work. There is some talk of putting recipients to work in government-paid work, but that cost to government could be immense.

And it gets worse. General Assistance (GA) is a small monthly stipend that counties currently must offer to destitute persons who have no other way of supporting themselves. Wilson plans to relieve counties of this responsibility. Thus even the GA safety net could be withdrawn from those who are dropped from other welfare programs and cannot find work. The innocent children of these families will be the ultimate victims of this cruel plan.

The Governor also says substance abusers should lose their AFDC. Although this might make for a nice-sounding sound bite on TV, very few public funds are being spent on drug-abuse treatment programs. There are long waiting lists for entry into the treatment programs that do exist. It's hard for substance abusers to sustain their resolve to quit during the long waiting period to get into a program. It's easy to understand why many "fall off the wagon" while waiting.

Please write to your Assemblymember and tell him or her that any welfare reform program should allow for continued benefits for those genuinely seeking work, but unable to find it. Welfare reform should include significant funding for job training and job search assistance, and for substance-abuse treatment programs. Please also tell your Assemblymember that General Assistance must remain as a guaranteed safety net for those removed from AFDC and who are unable to find work.

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Protecting Our Public Schools

Continued from page 4

qualify for these vouchers would be at risk of financial hardship and exploitation by unscrupulous private school operators. A.B. 25 appears to be another misguided attempt at resolving our public education problems by ignoring them.

The Lambda Letters Project strongly supports public education and believes that the appropriate response to perceived problems in our public schools is increased advocacy on behalf of our schools, with a recognition that they are capable of change, growth, and renewal if educators, parents, and community members work together to bring it about.

Voucher programs are not the answer to our educational problems. To the contrary, voucher programs would drain much-needed funding from our public schools without materially improving the educational opportunities available to the children on whose behalf they are ostensibly urged. Our lawmakers must know that we expect them to protect our schools and resist these school voucher schemes that do not benefit our communities.

Have you experienced employment discrimination because of your actual or perceived sexual orientation? If so, you may register a complaint with one of the following Division of Labor Standards Enforcement district offices.

Office	Phone
Bakersfield	805-395-2710
Eureka*	415-557-7878
Fresno	209-248-8400
Long Beach	310-590-5044
Los Angeles	213-897-4037
Marysville	916-741-4061
Oakland*	415-557-7878
Redding*	415-557-7878
Sacramento	916-263-2840
Salinas*	415-557-7878
San Bernardino	909-383-4333
San Diego	619-637-5500
San Francisco*	415-557-7878
San Jose*	415-557-7878
Santa Ana	714-558-4111
Santa Barbara	805-963-1438
Santa Rosa	707-576-2363
Stockton	209-948-7770
Van Nuys	818-901-5312
Ventura	805-654-4538

*These cities share an office.

Lambda Letters Board Sets Plans for Growth

New Members from Targeted Counties Wanted

We need your help in finding new Lambda Letters members. In particular, we are seeking new members from certain targeted counties. Here's the background on this new member drive.

At the April, 1996 meeting of the Lambda Letters Board of Directors, it was decided that the Project should seek to increase its membership in the districts of swing legislators in the state legislature. Swing legislators were defined as legislators who, on the basis of their voting records, were neither strongly for us nor strongly against us. Catherine Borger, then our Board Chair, was in the process of creating a scorecard which would show how state legislators voted on key bills relating to our four areas of concern. The scorecard would also assign a score to the voting record of each legislator.

At the July, 1996 meeting of the Board, Catherine presented the scorecard that she had created. The scorecard rated the voting records of state legislators and it defined swing legislators as those whose voting scores fell in the range of 30–70% It was decided that Lambda Letters should seek to find new member in the districts of these legislators in hopes that more constituent mail from our members would persuade them to improve their voting record.

The swing legislators shown in the scorecard were as follows:

In the Assembly

Jim Cunneen
Martha Escutia
Brooks Firestone
Jan Goldsmith
Steven Kuykendal
Bruce McPherson
Richard Rainey
James Rogan
Tom Woods

In the Senate

William Craven
Quentin Kopp
Steve Peace

However, it was decided that we should wait until this fall's election results were in before making a final decision on where we should seek new members. By the time of the January, 1997 Board meeting, the election results were in and the Board decided to seek to grow our membership in those counties represented by swing legislators who are still in the legislature. The targeted counties are as follows:

Alameda
Butte
Colusa
Contra Costa
Glenn
Los Angeles
Orange
San Diego
San Francisco
San Mateo
Santa Barbara
Santa Clara
Santa Cruz
Shasta
Sutter
Tehema

If you have friends in any of these counties, please tell them about the Lambda Letters Project and urge them to become members.

Lavender Valentines

Gary Nelson & Dennis Dudley 21 years

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Women's Issues Analyst Needed

We need a volunteer to help us prepare our monthly articles and sample letters on women's issues. This volunteer should have good writing skills. Access to a computer, and to the Internet, is highly desirable, but not required.

Volunteers spend about ten hours each month researching possible subjects and composing sample letters and articles for our newsletter. They also attend a monthly staff meeting in which each month's subjects are chosen and other important business of the Project is accomplished. Staff meetings are held in Sacramento, but analysts from other cities join the meeting by conference call. Analysts are also asked to attend quarterly board meetings in Sacramento. The Project will provide a travel allowance to cover the costs of people who must travel from other cities to attend these meetings.

The Project can provide leads on how to find suitable subjects and advice on writing, if needed. This is a great opportunity for you to influence the subjects we cover. Please consider volunteering for this important position, or help us find the person to do it.

If you're interested, please send us a note with your letters or call Boyce Hinman at (916) 965-6851. If you have e-mail, you can send a message to lambdalp@aol.com.

Want to Call Congress?

(800) 972-3524

In January Jan Hansen joined our Board of Directors and her presence on the Board is already paying dividends. She has told us a very useful fact that we are passing on to you. The above toll-free number can be used to call Congress. Just tell the operator the name of the senator or congressmember you want to contact, and the operator will put you through to that person's office. We urge you to use this number often. Legislators do care about the views of the voters in their districts. Your call can be a real benefit to the community, and to yourself.

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Nominations Accepted

Continued from page 1

phones of the candidates so we can confirm their willingness to run. Please note that our bylaws *do* allow the nomination of additional candidates at the annual meeting.

A member is defined by the bylaws as any person who subscribes to the purposes of the Lambda Letters Project and is a volunteer or contributor to the corporation or who is a letter writer in good standing—meaning someone who signs letters prepared by the Project or composes original letters and submits them to the Project for delivery to the addressee.

Please submit your name, address, phone number, and background information if you would like to serve on the Board of Directors, and please plan to attend our annual meeting on April 19, 1997. Help us make Lambda Letters a representative democracy!

Dignity for All Students

Continued from page 4

bisexuals already know or suspect: that the anti-gay harassment of students is widespread in schools. The Safe Schools Coalition found very serious incidents, ranging from seven instances of gang rape, many physical assaults, verbal harassment, vandalism, graffiti, and death threats. Another study, on teen health risks in Seattle schools, found that of students who identified themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, 34 percent had experienced harassment based on their sexual orientation. In addition, many students who identified as heterosexual had been harassed because they were perceived as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Four heterosexual youths experienced anti-gay harassment for every gay student who did.

In many cases, the Safe Schools Coalition study reported, less serious incidents of harassment had been ignored by school staff prior to the occurrence of very serious incidents such as rape or assault. Clearly bills such as A.B. 101 are needed if schools are to become a safer place for gay, lesbian, and bisexual students.

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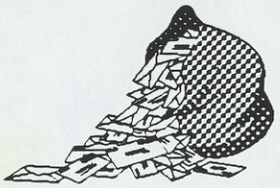
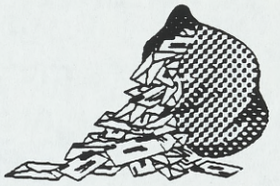


Can You Answer These Questions?



1. Who was the first lesbian ordained by a major religious denomination?

2. What was the first state to enact a statewide gay rights law?

3. Who was the first to introduce a bill in Congress to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation?

4. Which nation was the first to legalize gay and lesbian marriages?

5. In what year was the first International Gay Games held?

6. In what year did the Stonewall riots occur?

You can find the answer to these and many other fascinating questions in the Lambda Letters 1997 Calendar of Lesbian and Gay History. Please support the work of the Lambda Letters Project by ordering your calendar today. At just $7.95 per copy they are a steal and they make ideal holiday gifts for all your friends.

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- HOUSE w/TONY AT 9PM

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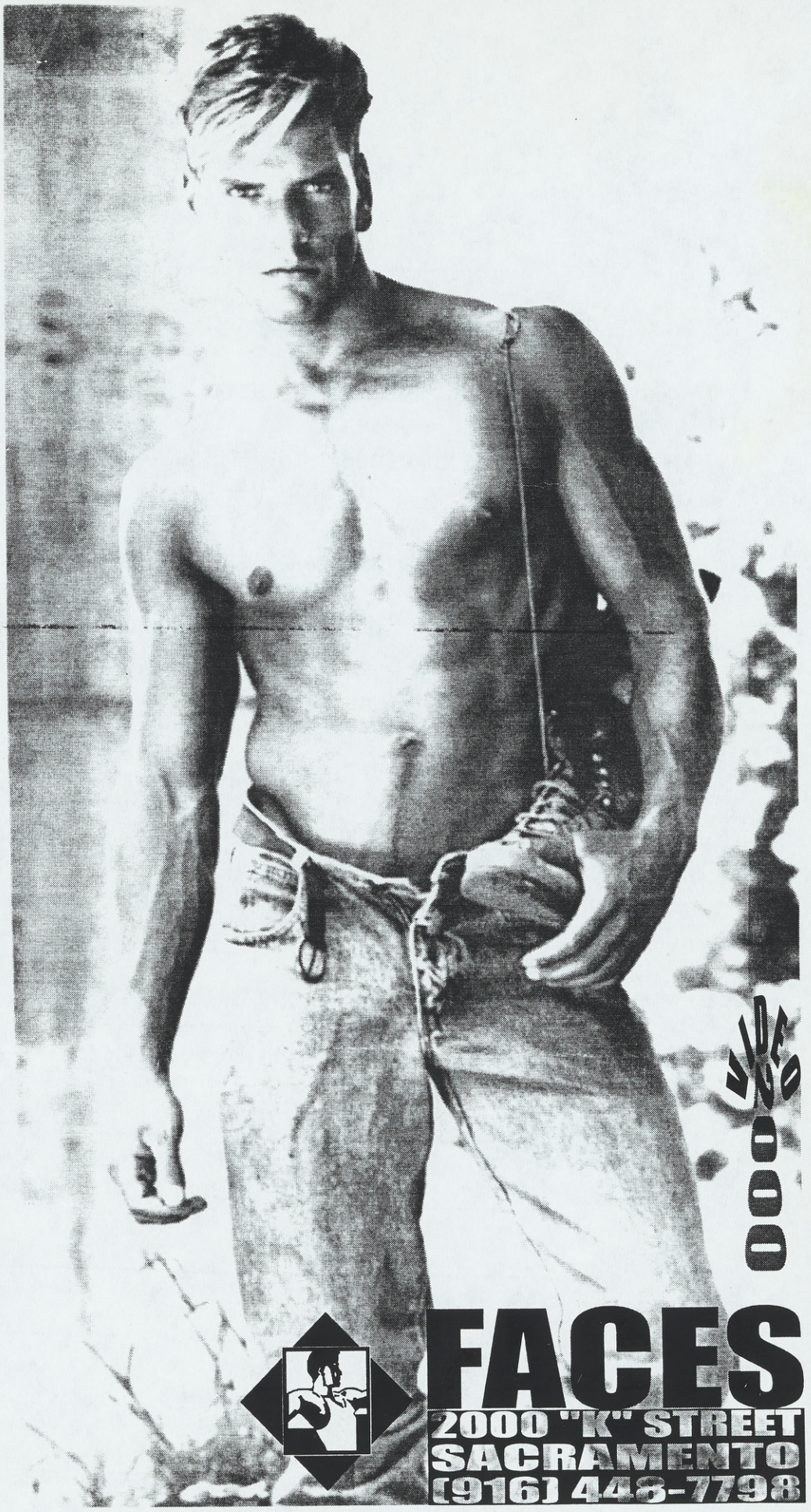

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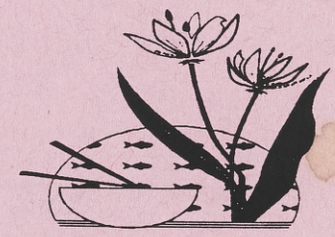
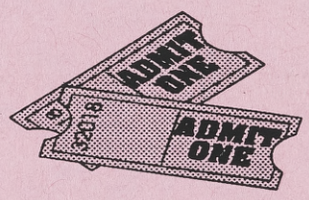
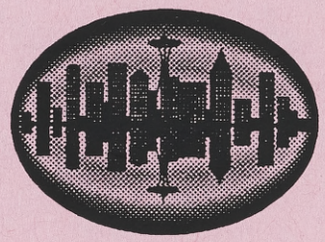


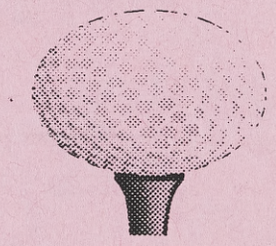
- **E**ntertainment - Discounts for movies, theaters and other attractions around town.



- **A**rts - Discounts for Fine Arts events throughout the area.



- **L**eisure - Discounts on travel, museums, fun centers and a whole lot of other stuff!



- **S**ports - Discounts on your favorite sporting events: baseball, golf, bowling and swimming. See and do it all for half the price.

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